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CHINA FACED WITH NUMEROUS FORESTRY PROBLEMS

Comment and Summary: Statistics indicate serious losses from forest fires in China. Such losses have been caused in some measure by bureaucratic methods of officials but mostly by carelessness and incorrect practices on the part of the farmers.

A directive issued by the vice-chairman of the Sinkiang Provincial government urges careful attention to the nurture of newly planted saplings. An editorial writer stresses the same point in the Sinkiang Jih pao for 17 May 1953.

Spring freshets make possible the floating out of logs cut in the forests. In carrying out such operations, methods promoting safety must be employed.

BRUSH FIRES CAUSE DAMAGE IN SEVERAL PROVINCES -- Peiping, Jen-min Jih-pao, 31 May 53

Statistics

In 50 hsien of six special administrative districts in Shansi Province, from the last part of December 1952 to the end of April 1953, no less than 187 brush fires took place. Wasteland and woodland were burned over to the extent of 63,000 mou, with the loss of 160,000 trees.

In Fukien Province, from November 1952 to the end of January 1953, incomplete statistics reveal that disastrous fires occurred 210 times in 44 hsien. The 350,000-mou area destroyed by fire was equal to 44 percent of the whole area in the province which had been afforested this year. The area damaged was 528,000 mou. One fire in Ning-yang Hsien burned up over 173,000 mou of woodland.

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In Kwangtung Province, during winter 1952, 285 brush fires burned 2,400,000 mou of woodland in 34 hsien.

In Heilungkiang Province, on 29 April 1953, a fire started in Pei-hsing Hsiang, Nun-chiang Hsien, which was most difficult to stop. The vice-chairman of the People's Government of Heilungkiang Province and the Magistrate of Nun-chiang Hsien led more than 40,000 men to fight the fire day and night for 10 days before it was completely extinguished. The burned-over land extended for over 200 li, with a width of 50 li at the widest part.

In the Jo-oda League area in Inner Mongolia, an extensive fire started on 28 April 1953 and burned over a portion of timber and some pasture land.

In the forests of Hopeh, Honan, Anhwei, and Kiangsi fires constantly destroyed timber.

#### The Reasons for Lack of Fire Protection

1. The bureaucratic attitude of some organizations is one reason for so many destructive fires. In some localities, where forest protection organizations have been set up, there has been no one individual especially responsible, and the result has been an organization in name only, without any action. Some cadres have no concern for national resources or for the people's livelihood.
2. In the majority of cases, carelessness of farmers was the immediate cause. They burned off the tall grass or rushes for fertilizer, and they burned off the grass at the edges of the fields or on the raised paths intersecting the plowed fields. Fires were also caused by smokers and by people building fires by which to warm or dry themselves.
3. The custom of burning off the hills was also a cause of fires. Fires are most prevalent in winter and spring, when the farmers, according to long-established custom, burn off the hills to prepare land for cultivation. Even if the land is not plowed, the grass comes up more evenly and luxuriantly after being burned over.

#### Reasons Why Farmers Are Not More Actively Interested in Fire Prevention

1. In some places where official orders strictly prohibit all burning over of hills and on all animal grazing, no consideration is given the farmer's need to pasture his cattle and sheep. Since this does not help him solve his practical problem of production, it is a natural cause for discontent.
2. In other localities, not enough consideration is given to property rights. In some cases, mountain land which was allocated during land distribution was later confiscated by the government. In Shansi Province, at the time when forest rights were being settled, there were places where the people were urged to donate their land. In one case where two brothers held a "family mountain" the authorities considered it a "clan mountain" and then expropriated it. (Yet clan mountains should not be confiscated.)
3. In still other cases, too many restrictions hinder fire prevention. In the case of some forests, though they are considered as belonging to the people, there are all sorts of restrictions as to lumbering and selling. All this is quite contrary to the principle of protection of the people's rights. It naturally militates against any active interest in forest preservation.

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SINKIANG PROVINCIAL VICE-CHAIRMAN GIVES IMPORTANT AFFORESTATION DIRECTIVES --  
Urumchi, Sinkiang Jih-pao, 17 May 53

On 10 May 1953, Kao Chin-ch'un, vice-chairman of the People's Government of Sinkiang Province, together with the vice-chairman of the Department of Agriculture and Forestry and several cadre technicians from the Forestry Bureau, investigated the situation regarding afforestation. A study of the planting done by official organizations and schools, in general, showed a very good survival rate of the seedlings and a good growth. After his inspection, he issued several directives regarding this important afforestation work, as follows:

1. All of the afforestation units in Urumchi municipality should be told at once to make an inspection of the afforestation work done this year. They should arouse the people to keep irrigating the saplings at regular times. A conference should be called at which each unit reports the situation as regards the survival of the trees planted. The conference should establish regulations for forest protection and forest control.
2. The Department of Agriculture and Forestry should order each special Administrative district and hsien to make a complete survey of the planting of trees done in the past and during the present year. The results of this survey should be reported to the higher authorities.
3. Each afforestation unit should see to it that saplings which have died this spring be replaced at the appropriate time in the fall. Trees should be pruned and cared for.
4. Because of wide variations in soil and climate in Sinkiang, experimentation is very important before deciding which trees best fit each environment.

The Department of Agriculture and Forestry, in addition to heeding carefully this directive of vice-chairman Kao, has organized three inspection teams to go to such places as Kuldja, Chuguchak, Wu-su, and Sha-wan.

TIMBER LOSS FROM FIRE AND INDISCRIMINATE LUMBERING, CADRES FAIL TO INSTRUCT --  
Wu-lan-hao-t'ie, Nei-meng-ku Jih-pao, 19 May 53

In the Eighth Ch'u of K'ai-lu Hsien, Jehol, the ts'un and ch'u cadres have no emphatic instructions for the people regarding fire protection of the forests. The result has been serious loss of timber from fires started by carelessness.

There also has been loss of timber caused by reckless lumbering. The cadres paid no attention when trees were wantonly cut down. This spring, some farmers were given permission to cut willow branches to make fences. The resulting timber loss was considerable.

AFTER AFFORESTATION, NEW TREES MUST BE PROTECTED -- Wu-lan-hao-t'ie, Nei-meng-ku Jih-pao, 17 May 53

An editorial writer states that the experience of past years has shown that many people fail to understand the real purpose of afforestation. After the trees were planted, they felt no responsibility for their preservation, with the result that every year new trees were planted but none ever developed.

This year, after approval of the proposition to construct on a large scale a protective belt of trees, the people's ideas were clearer, but those leading in this enterprise must realize that leadership is not to stop with the planting

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of trees. This is only the first step in the process. It is important to "guarantee to plant, guarantee that the shoots will live, and guarantee that they will finally become part of the forest."

To accomplish the above goals, there must be thorough indoctrination, making it clear to the villagers that to construct a protective forest belt is to change nature, preventing disasters from wind, sand, floods, and drought. It is a fundamental method for direct aid toward agricultural and pastoral production.

People should be aroused to sign a covenant to protect the forests and a system of awards and punishments should be instituted.

The bureaus concerned with forestry should constantly penetrate far into the forest belt, inspecting the situation as regards protection of the trees and encouraging each locality to increase its protection of the forests.

SAFE AND EFFICIENT METHODS IN FLOATING LOGS -- Wu-lan-hao-t'e, Nei-meng-ku Jih-pao, 19 May 53

A newspaper editorial entitled "Make Full Use of the Spring Freshets to Transport All the Lumber" stresses efficient coordination of the various operations involved so as to lessen the timber loss and to speed up the rate of transporting the logs in the A-erh-shan and T'u-lo Ho areas.

Safety must always be stressed. Inspection should be enforced, and laborers should be given safety instruction. Property must never be regarded as more important than the safety of workers' lives.

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